

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 PC-15

SY-10 A-01 RSR-01 /114 W

----- 075857

R 281118Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3005

C O N F I D E N T I A L KAMPALA 2665

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC PFOR UG US

SUBJECT: INCIDENT OF DETENTION OF PCV'S AT ENTEBBE

1. HAVE RECEIVED COPY OF UGANDAN EMBASSY NOTE TO DEPT. RE INCIDENT OF PCV DETENTION AT ENTEBBE (STATE 152417). AS STRESSED BY MWANGAHUHUNGA, NOTE STATES THAT I WAS PERSONALLY INFORMED OF GOU'S ACTION BY GENERAL AMIN "BEFORE THE AMERICAN CITIZENS UNDER REFERENCE WERE STOPPED FROM PROCEEDING TO THEIR DESTINATION." FOR THE RECORD (AND THE RECORD ONLY, SINCE I SEE NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM PURSUING MATTER WITH GOU NOW) I SHOULD LIKE TO REINTERATE THAT GENERAL AMIN DID NOTHING OF THE SORT. AS REPORTED IN KAMPALA 2191, WHICH WAS DRAFTED ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER THE EVENT, GENERAL STATED EXACTLY THE FOLLOWING TO ME AT ENTEBBE IN THE "V.I.P. QUEUE": QTE I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT A VC-10 OF EAST AFRICAN AIRWAYS IS TAKING ONE HUNDRED AMERICANS TO RWANDA. I HAVE ORDERED MY AIR FORCE TO INTERCEPT THIS FLIGHT. END QTE.

2. I IMMEDIATELY TRANSLATED THESE WORDS TO THE RWANDAN CHARGE, REPEATED THEM TO SEVERAL OTHER DIPLOMATS, AND THEN QUOTED THEM TO NTIMBA, SO THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT I RECALLED THE GENERAL'S PRECISE WORDS. THE UGANDAN EMBASSY'S NOTE IS THUS INACCURATE IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT RESPECTS, IN MY OPION: THE GENERAL DID NOT TELL ME THE PLANE HAD JUST TAKEN OFF FROM ENTEBBE. HE TOLD ME HE HAD ORDERED HIS AIR FORCE "TO INTERCEPT THE FLIGHT," LEAVING THE IMPLICATION THAT THE VC-10 WAS OVERFLYING UGANDA.

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HE DID NOT SAY HE HAD ORDERED THE PLANE TO RETURN TO ENTEBBE.

HE GAVE ITS DESTINATION AS RWANDA, NOT BURUNDI. HE SAID NOTHING

ABOUT "INVESTIGATIONS REGARDING THE AMERICANS ABOARD." AND HE TOLD ME AFTER THE FACT OF HIS HAVING PREVENTED THE PCV'S FROM PROCEEDING TO THEIR DESTINATION, NOT BEFORE. HAD HE STATED WHAT THE UGANDAN EMBASSY'S NOTE SAYS HE STATED IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EASIER TO FIGURE OUT WHAT FLIGHT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT, ITS WHEREABOUTS, THE IDENTITY OF ITS PASSENGERS AND ITS GENERAL STATUS.

3. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT DURING ALL THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THIS INCIDENT, AS IS CONFIRMED BY THE EMBASSY'S EXTENSIVE REPORTING ON IT, THE EMBASSY WAS NOT ONLY IGNORED BUT WAS POSITIVELY THWARTED IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM SATISFACTORILY. OUR INTERVENTIONS WERE RESENTED AS WELL AS REJECTED. THE CHARGE WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS A MILITARY MATTER WITH WHICH DIPLOMATS WHOULD NOT CONCERN THEMSELVES, THAT IT WAS BEING HANDLED BY THE GENERAL PERSONALLY AND HE WAS UNAVAILABLE, THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY COULD NOT INTERVENE AS IT WAS NOT IN ITS PROVINCE, AND THAT THE EMBASSY'S ASSURANCES AS TO THE BONA FIDES OF THE PCV'S WERE OF NO VALUE OR CONSEQUENCE BECAUSE THE GENERAL THAD TO RECEIVE ASSURANCES FROM ONE OR MORE AFRICAN CHIEFS OF STATE, OAU OFFICIALS OR SOMEONE THAT THESE WERE REALLY PCV'S DESTINED FOR ZAIRE VIA BURUNDI. THE USG'S ASSURANCES WERE NOT ONLY UNASKED FOR, THEY WERE LABELLED INADEQUATE IN ADVANCE AND IN FACT WERE POSITIVELY UNWELCOME TO GENERAL AMIN. THAT IS THE CRUX OF THE MATTER, AND NOT WHAT GENERAL AMIN SAID TO THE CHARGE WHILE STROLLING DOWN THE RED CARPET.

KEELEY

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